

Article for the Citizen's Income Trust

**Promoting Income Security: Zygmunt Bauman and
the Radicalisation of the Basic Income Debate**

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December 2005

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the thoughts of Zygmunt Bauman to the debates on income security and significant economic rights such as the basic income (BI). In many ways this is an unconventional paper. This is because it is more of a philosophical evaluation of an approach that does not concern itself too much with empirical economics. Initially, this might sound like hubris and reckless chutzpah. But as the paper develops the justification for this becomes increasingly evident. Since the main thinker discussed in the paper argues that the very problem with contemporary economics is economic reason itself (even of the type that features within laterally-thinking intuitions like the ILO), it seems fitting that we step outside of a purely economic mindset. By doing this, our appraisal is not clouded and prejudiced by hegemonic economic reason. Thus we can hear his novel argument out in a fairer manner. And it is to this goal that I will now turn.

It seems astonishing that Bauman,¹ a highly respected contemporary political philosopher, has not figured in any of the income security debates. This, I argue is to the detriment of these debates. In many ways then, this paper is an attempt to valorise Bauman's work. Critically introducing his ideas to this subject would mark an original contribution. The importance of this contribution is that Bauman's perspective helps highlight some of the shortcomings that have underpinned the discussion so far. The motivation for writing this working paper then, is three-fold. Firstly, it attempts to redress the fact that his ideas have remained conspicuously absent from the debate. Secondly, there is a need to examine in greater detail the limitations that he has identified. Finally, an evaluation of the validity of his critique ought to be made. For instance, which aspects of his argument can we discount? And from what is leftover, to what extent can these ideas be used to shape and direct the BI debate in a progressive direction?

Whilst recognising that his argument is not without its problems, I am confident that his ideas would make a positive contribution to the discussion. In essence, his analysis is a cautionary tale. It represents an appeal to reconsider the nature and direction that the debate has

¹ In actual fact, Bauman needs little assistance in having his profile raised. Outside of the relatively narrow debates of income security he is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of our time. He has written on many subjects, most notable of these is his examination of the holocaust (1991a); his ideas on modernity and post-modernity (1991b; 1997), and more recently his continuing exploration of the vertigo of being and the various sources of humanity's contemporary troubles (2003; 2005). As an advocate of the BI, he lends great succor to calls for it to become political reality. Hence, underscoring my argument that he must feature more significantly in these debates.

taken thus far. His views are important because they shake up and loosen a slightly concerning consensus that has formed within these debates. Consequently, his approach could radicalise and rejuvenate these discourses. Bauman's view on this matter is expressed in a small, yet intellectually rich section of his book *In Search of Politics* (1999: 180-197). Despite its brevity, the section is replete with many pertinent observations that ought to feature more centrally in discussions concerning income security.

By way of a short prelude of the discussion that follows, his argument explores the tension between a position of **instantaneity/immediacy** (i.e., we must aim for an immediate and unmodified implementation of income security measures; of the type that do not yield any political ground) against **varying velocities of gradualism** or **piecemeal** approaches. His concern is that the latter strategy may impede the goal of implementing income security measures. Owing to the fact that political gradualism renders these measures more vulnerable to hijacking by the political right, and that they could peter out through lack of the necessary political momentum. As a result he urges us to be more audacious and utopian,² in order to recapture the emancipatory thrust of the proposal. This, it is argued, will reveal the deeper (and true) potential of decoupling essential livelihood from employment.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that Bauman is not hostile to thinkers who advocate greater income security; quite the opposite in fact: he lavishes plaudits upon them. Let's be clear then about the precise nature of Bauman's position on this matter. He is without question an earnest advocate, and he is certainly not taking wanton potshots at its key thinkers. Nor does he conjecture from an ill-informed and misinformed position. This is why he suggests that the decoupling of income entitlements from paid work and from the labour market could

² Referring to Bauman as 'utopian' is not necessarily helpful in furnishing his ideas with more credibility. However, there is a need to rescue the meaning of 'utopia' from its pejorative status. Firstly, to do this we must distinguish Bauman's utopian position and that of other post-capitalist thinkers from what might be regarded as being *utopianist*, whereby the belief is proffered that an ultimately perfectible society is attainable. The former do not think this is so. On the contrary they subscribe (tacitly and explicitly) to the post-marxist idea that power and antagonism cannot ever be fully eliminated from any social system or all social relations. This precept also manifests itself in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (1954), who has suggested that the *ultimate* or utopia may not be achievable, but the *penultimate* is a possibility, or what James Meade calls '*agathotopia*': the 'good place' (My emphasis: 1989: 1). This impossibility of ever achieving utopian *telos* is not something which should dishearten us. Quite the opposite, a *permanently displaced utopia actually invites the continuous possibility of progressive social change*, and (in a prophylactic sense) protects against political stagnation and totalitarianism. To give an example of this kind of thinking, Chantal Mouffe argues that a good society is one that is always in a state of becoming. For instance a good (plural) democratic society:

should be conceived as a good that only exists as a good so long as it cannot be reached. Such a democracy will therefore always be democracy 'to come', as conflict and antagonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its full realisation. (1993: 9).

The same philosophical caution ought to feature even in an egalitarian symposium such as BIEN, which can also slide into intellectual stasis.

remove *'the awesome fly of insecurity from the sweet ointment of freedom'* (1999: 188). These are hardly the words of a man who wishes to undermine a project aimed at establishing a protected egalitarian world through the development of greater income security.

However, he feels that some of the key thinkers within this area do themselves and discourses concerned with promoting income security a tremendous disservice. Firstly, if we consider this criticism *vis-à-vis* the BI, we observe that Bauman feels that its protagonists understate the value of the idea. For its potential is diminished because proponents make the mistake of 'selling it too cheaply' (1999: 186), and secondly these individuals are too preoccupied with satisfying the requirements of (hegemonic) economic feasibility. Consequently, they make the mistake of 'offering it [the BI] to the wrong buyer' (Ibid.), therefore curtailing its capacity to act as an exit route to a very different (better) world. This is simply because its possible potentiality remains insufficiently exploited by the existing approach.

Bauman's position is interesting to anyone who is seriously concerned about advancing significant economic rights, and advancing it as effectively and as rapidly as possible. This is why his views matter, and this is why this paper matters.

Bauman's Critique

Bauman's critique centres primarily on the proposal of a BI, and specifically the type that is championed by Claus Offe in his book *Modernity and the State: East and West* (1996). While Bauman's critique is focused on the key tenets of Offe's argument, in a broader sense his critique can also be extended beyond this and applied to the work of other key figures within the BI advocacy group BIEN.³ Now obviously BIEN is composed of disaggregated, plural and competing conceptions of the exact purpose of a BI and how best to implement it. There are various ideological currents. Nevertheless, the fact that his critique finds continuity elsewhere, illustrates that there has been an emergence of a subtle consensus. Hence, I describe this consensus as a 'soft' consensus in order to connote that it is not binding or all totalising one, but it is still discernable. This consensus could become problematic over time if left unchecked, especially if the BI proposal edges closer to political reality. Although Van Parijs does not refer to the actual existence of such a consensus, he does recognise that such mini-consensus can come

³ BIEN refers to the Basic Income Earth Network.

into being. Thus he emphasises that ‘it is of crucial importance to listen and keep listening to sympathetic and intelligent but unambiguously critical voices’ (2002: 8 – 9). Bauman’s critique fits this description perfectly, which therefore substantiates my argument that we ought to listen to him more carefully. Bauman’s critique is based on three objections to the ‘soft’ consensus approach that I shall now elaborate on:

Critique 1: The BI proposal is introduced as a *social policy* measure.

Why is this a problem? On the face of it, it seems a perfectly reasonable way to articulate the proposal. Surely it is logical to utilise the existing political notion of a social policy and the bureaucratic mechanisms which accompanies this notion, as a means for transferring income from the state to the populace. Also, isn’t Bauman just being over-fastidious, hence over-psychologising the semantic significance of the referential term that Offe employs? In light of this, I shall now move on to explore Bauman’s argument and the validity of the reproaches that might be invoked by it.

Firstly, Bauman’s concern is that the greater significance and potential impact of the proposal is diluted if it expressed merely as a social policy. This is because a social policy is invariably expressed through the language of problem resolution. The up shot of this is that in the style of a self-fulfilling prophecy the proposal becomes just that, and more worryingly, only that: a problem-solving device. As a social policy the BI proposal is in danger of being politically typecast as an income transfer simply intended to ‘resolve the problem of the poor – to lift the poor from their poverty’ (Bauman, 1999: 183). If advocates of the BI become satisfied with promoting the BI on the premise that it can humanise the worst excesses of capitalism, they might confine its emancipatory possibilities to mediocre reform rather than revolutionary reform. To give an example, in *Basic Income on the Agenda: Policy Objectives and Political Chances* (2000), Veen and Groot seem intent on answering what they propose is the new social question of our time: the double bind of unemployment and poverty and how this might be remedied. This results in the portrayal of the BI as a ‘double-edged sword’ intended for poverty mitigation and unemployment reduction. In depicting the BI in such a way, the proponents of the BI underplay the potential value of the BI, precisely because they package it as a social policy. Despite the decency of such an attempt, Bauman is concerned that the radical potential of the BI is

extinguished. Hence it ends up becoming another form of wealth redistribution and social policy, rather than a more concerted attempt to radically alter the human condition.

Clearly Bauman thinks the impact of a BI could be very significant. Like others, he feels that it could fulfil the leftist libertarian notions of ‘positive liberty’, freeing individuals from morbid existential insecurity or his preferred term ‘*Unsicherheit*’ (i.e. translated into English this conveys the experience of insecurity, uncertainty and unsafety). The potential of the BI for him is that it can limit the risks involved in practising freedom:

This limitation of risks and damages is precisely the most crucial objective of a basic income. When (if) this objective is reached, men and women no longer afraid to use their freedom may find the time, will and courage to construct ever more humane meanings of their humanity, to consider and select forms of life which are both satisfying and rational. (1999: 188 - 189)

This would be by no means a small achievement. This is why his argument that poverty alleviation cannot be the only reason to advance the BI, ought not to be understood as some nonchalant and petty philosophical swipe at the work of Offe *et al.*

Without question any attempt to address poverty and the damaging consequences of unemployment is certainly an important intervention for many people. However, the concern still lingers that advancing the BI on this ground alone, would only pigeonhole it as a form of ‘crisis management’. Promoted in this more truncated form the BI becomes ‘another ‘one-issue’ and ‘focused’ policy, fully in keeping with the ‘problem resolution’ approach of conventional (moderate) politics (Bauman, 1999: 183). Whereas, if articulated differently it could be a vision guided strategy oriented towards pursuing a more radical transformatory agenda. By extending the appeal and relevance of the BI beyond one group, we break out of the language of ‘needing most’. We thus by-pass all the means testing and conditionality that this implies. Freed from the assignment of such a narrow purpose the BI could:

change radically the nature of the polity; it would transform it from an agency of law and order and a crisis-management fire brigade into a common weal and the arena where individual and group interests are reforged into public issues of concern to all citizens alike. Instead of merely toning down divisions and preventing conflicts from inflammation, the polity might even become the seedbed of solidarity. Last but not least, having liberated its citizens from uncertainty surrounding their survival pursuits, the polity may set them free to pursue their republican rights and duties. (Ibid., 184)

While Offe's social policy argument (i.e. poverty alleviation) is attractive it cannot be the sole reason to resort to a BI. Further elaboration on this point illuminates the very restrictive framework that the language of social policy places around the proposal. If we delve into just a handful of the latent possibilities that others have identified in the proposals we can see this very clearly. For instance, we can see that some think a BI could:

1. Promote historical equity: 'the present day wealth of the West is the joint legacy of generations and ought to benefit all descendants.' (Ibid., 181).⁴
2. Fulfil existing and potential new human rights. (See: Sheahen, 2004)
3. Grant people more choice in how, when, where and how much they work. It therefore liberates the individual from having to submit herself to 'the definition of work imposed by the labour market' (Bauman, 1999: 181)
4. Assist the green agenda of encouraging 'self-limitation'⁵ and the exigencies of more sane consumption. (See: Gorz, 1993; & Lord, 2002)
5. Promote 'gender-neutral social citizenship rights' (Cruz-Saco, 2002: 7). Therefore, improving women's lives by providing greater financial independence and autonomy.
6. Create the right for each individual to transcend the mere function of being productive and therefore have the right to a resourced autonomy that is irreducible to economic instrumentalisation. (Gorz, 1999: 88)
7. Be understood as Republican (citizen) right; a constitutional or political right. (ILO, 2004: 15; 387 - 389). Thus enabling a form of citizenship that could rejuvenate the fading intuitions of the republic and citizenship.

Clearly when sold just as measure for poverty alleviation the understating of the proposal becomes apparent. By doing this, other potentialities that the proposal might possess are repressed and excluded. Furthermore, Bauman goes on to argue that from a strategic point of view, if the

⁴ Drawing inspiration from Thomas Paine, Van Parijs has also articulated this idea as a kind of patrimonial dividend, where:

'the land and natural resources within any society's territory are seen as the patrimony of the entire group...[because] the annual production of a national economy must be owing in large part to social interactions, shared understanding, institutional capital' (2001: xi - xii).

⁵ Similarly, this notion has also been articulated by David Korten as 'voluntary simplicity', where a culture is engendered that privileges a situation where the individual spends 'less time working for money, leading lives less cluttered by stuff, and spending more time living' (2000: 267).

BI proposal is conceived of as a proposal intended only for sorting out the predicament of one section of the society (i.e. the poor) it is unlikely to find societal-wide support. This is crucial precisely because a broad solidaristic form of support will be needed if it is actually to be implemented. Those who articulate the BI as a single-issue policy targeted at a particular group, weaken its prospects of implementation. The proposal stands a better chance of political acceptance if it is made to have universal existential appeal. The richer members of society will not find the idea appealing because of its quantitative income boosting capacity. After all, in the higher to middle echelons of the income-earning bracket, a BI will make barely an imprint on the actual and perceived level of prosperity of these individuals. *A fortiori*, it is more the qualitative improvement that a BI could deliver to their lives that will be more alluring. This is because the BI has the quality of enabling different behaviour and different choices. For one, it resources multiple life options. More importantly however, it might help unleash a cultural mutation that strikes at the heart of the work-based society. It may therefore substitute the norms of the wage-based society and heteronomous work with new norms that lead to an existence characterised by greater heterogeneous and autonomous (more satisfying) activity. This is what Gorz calls a 'multi-activity' life.⁶ For Bauman and Gorz the purpose of the BI is to free people from the

⁶ *Multi-activity* should be thought of as a key social issue and a precondition for life enrichment. Gorz thinks it must be forced onto the political agenda, and the BI might help facilitate this. For Gorz, heteronomous work must come to occupy a subordinate position in the life plan of individuals. This involves removing waged-work from the centre of gravity in everyone's life, so that it is just one of many components integrated into a multi-activity or 'pluri-activity' life. Under such conditions heteronomous work becomes an occupation which is welcomed for the spontaneity, diversity, chance encounters, contact, the 'rhythm and timing' that it adds to your life (Gorz, 1985: 53). A BI might allow free time to expand so that a multi-activity life finds its normative basis (i.e. becomes regarded as socially normal). Consequently, heteronomous/socially necessary work becomes all the more acceptable and may no longer be viewed as mundane compulsion which we have to do. This is why there are no grounds for the objection that the BI will discourage people from working. On the contrary there is every possibility that the reduction of compulsory wage-labour along with the growth of new socialities will encourage people to seek 'socially necessary work for the same reasons that house-bound women, the retired, the unemployed, sons and daughters of peasants seek waged work, even if unrewarding' (Ibid., 54). These reasons are best summarized by the following observations:

[Heteronomous work] provides an escape from the narrowness and stifling conformity of the domestic unit or village community, a way of meeting other people from other places with whom a relationship can be freer, less familiar, than those who see you first and foremost as daughter or daughter-in-law, sister or cousin, and tie you to a carefully regulated world where everyone must keep to their allotted place...[and thus allows you] to exist as a fully social individual protected from the pressures of particular groups by anonymous membership of society at large. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, as Eduardo Suplicy (2002) argues, the rich still work even though they have the very real option of abstaining from work. At a deeper philosophical level, human life is self-creation – '*autopoiesis*'. Humans give their own meaning to this world, and man is also a 'practico-sensory' creature (Gorz, 1982: 103) which generally seeks the opportunity to engage in a variety of different activities in order to gain fulfilment and meaning. Hence, in a sense there is spiritual necessity to work. Furthermore, according to Richard Layard's study of happiness (2005: 67 - 68), people not only work for an income but also out of a sense of status that work confers and derive a sense of esteem important to happiness. Most anthropologist and philosophers would agree that opportunities to engage in diverse activities, to move between various spheres of action, is a good recipe for a satisfying and meaningful existence. However, this must be buttressed by a guaranteed means of survival, opportunities for meaningful engagement with others and resourced activity, so that contingency is not allowed to prosper. This slightly essentialist, but

constraints of the labour market. The BI could enable rich and poor individuals to refuse work and reject ‘inhuman’ working conditions, or simply reject types and patterns of work that are not conducive to a satisfying and meaningful existence. (As footnote 6 explains, this does not mean that people will be discouraged from working). It could become part of a:

social environment which enables all citizens to decide on an on-going basis between the use-value of their time and its exchange value: that is to say between the ‘utilities’ they can acquire by selling their working time and those they can ‘self-provide’ by using that time themselves. (Gorz, 1999: 83).

It is this latter point that will be more of interest to the political and politically influential class.

According to Bauman then, selling the BI as a one-issue policy essentially erodes the proposal’s potential to radically transform society. This is because it is not conceived as a vision-guided strategy. Moreover, there is further reason to be alarmed here, because we live in age where voices calling for universalism are barely audible. And the approach of Offe renders these voices mute when the BI could actually act as a means of amplifying them. Arguably, many of our contemporary troubles⁷ can be explained by the retreat of universalisms from our lives. The BI and the corollary of effects it might engender could be just the kind of vision guided political strategy that could radically reconfigure these troubles. Bauman would argue strongly that people need universalisms and ideals. In fact Ernst Bloch thinks that the importance of universalisms lies in their capacity to provide ‘hope’ (1985), a hope that our lives are on a desirable course and heading in a positive direction. We need a sense of moving towards something better in order to feel good. Much of our present existential insecurity can be explained by the absence of universal values and projects. Contingent time and contingent lives synonymous with postmodernity are frightening. Postmodern society leaves us with the ‘terror of boundlessness... and the vain search for a steady and continuous itinerary’ (Bauman, 2001: 44), the fear of the unstructured life without recognisable and reliable points of moral and ethical reference:

nevertheless compelling argument, suggests that the vast majority of humans enjoy being creative and engaging in a variety of different activities which are freely chosen. It is qualities such as these that endow the BI with universal existential appealing.

⁷ It is quite reasonable to argue that at present the advanced capitalist societies are experiencing a societal-wide existential malaise, characterised by growing psychological disorders (depression, mental illness *et cetera*). Evidence of this comes from a wide range of sources: the WHO (2005), Layard (2005), Andrew Solomon (2002), MIND (2004). Cultural references to this phenomenon can also be found in films like *Fight Club* and *American Beauty*.

It is not the overwhelming pressure of an ideal which they cannot live up to that torments contemporary men and women, but the absence of ideals: the dearth of *eindeutig* [unequivocal] recipes for a decent life, of firmly fixed and steady orientation points, of a predictable destination for the life itinerary. Mental depression - a feeling of one's impotence, of inability to act, and particularly the inability to act rationally, to be adequate to the task of life – become the emblematic malaise of our late modern, postmodern times. (Ibid., 43).⁸

Living in a post-political and post-ideological world, void of idealism, is not something to be celebrated. In fact in the view of Hannah Arendt (1995) it is precisely when there is a kind of ideological void, and absence of progressive utopian thought that fascistic ideology and xenophobic tribalism can find a firm footing in society. Fascistic thought engenders its own twisted yet attractive utopias, therefore plugging that (unbearable) gap in the order of being that is precipitated by the absence of universalisms. Fascistic ideologies can stem the flow of existential contingency. People fall back on mysterious laws of history and nature in order to give definition and direction to their lives. We therefore need (a post-marxist-informed - See Footnote 2) universalism and utopian thought to re-activate our political imagination, without which we have no direction. We need a coherent vision of a better future.

Having recognised the vacuum left by the (alleged) death of universalisms, the task that emancipatory politics must set itself is to *recall universalism from its long overdue exile* (Bauman, 1999: 190-197). And this exactly why the BI ought to be articulated as something more than just a social policy.

Bauman's concerns can be understood as an anxiety that some strains of BIEN's approach could be counter-productive, driving the BI agenda down a kind of welfare state cul-de-sac, from which it is difficult to reverse. The fear is that the BI will never have its full significance realised if the debate is not sufficiently developed towards a wider discursive framework. As we will see later Bauman also thinks that the proposal affords the possibility of radically renegotiating the dominance of capitalism, and perhaps even points the way towards a world beyond capitalism: a post-capitalist society.

⁸ Some would criticise Bauman on the grounds that he is too conservative. After all, mental depression can also arise because life is too predictable. However, in defense of Bauman, he is not suggesting that the complete absence of insecurity, (depression, existential malaise *et cetera*) is a desirable goal. Rather he is suggesting that *there is too much insecurity* at present and this is rooted far too firmly in the realm of necessity/survival. It is therefore much better to locate existential insecurity beyond the realm of survival. By doing this we preserve the progressive (life enhancing) aspects on insecurity whilst reducing the constricting forms that typify morbid insecurity. Within the boundaries of security that he is arguing for, he would no doubt welcome all manner of insecurity (existential anxiety) that can foster an economy of being that sets out for self-improvement.

Critique 2: Where is the political will and force to implement the BI? Who and what are the agents and sites of change?

Bauman's concern here stems from the perennial problem of translating theory into praxis and bridging the gap that exists between the two. For there is always a tension of incompleteness between the promise and the reality of any idea. More specifically, it addresses the fact that we have to identify a suitable agency or agencies for this translation.

Firstly, can we assume that the political class of our time is 'motivated by the wish, or prompted by necessity 'to fulfil the obligations of the social state' ' (1999: 184) as Offe *et al* assume. Secondly, an argument couched in terms of necessity and poverty alleviation is unlikely to cut much ice with this group. Why is this? With the exception of all but a few nation states the political class plays a largely supportive role to capital. This group is concerned with making populations more insecure and thus more amenable to the dictates of profit. Today conventional politics is not driven by emancipatory interest; it has discharged itself of any major concern with improving the human condition. Rather it is driven by what Habermas calls the 'technical interest', an interest in disencumbering capitalism of the obstacles that lay in the way of its pursuit of economic growth:

In so far as government action is directed toward the economic system's stability and growth, politics now takes on a peculiarly negative character. For it is oriented toward the elimination of dysfunctions and the avoidance of risks that threaten the system: not in other words, toward the realization of practical goals but toward the solution of technical problems. (1970)

Politics helps capitalism avoid and overcome obstacles to its growth. To give an example, this might take the form of disempowering secure communities of solidarity or a strong labour force with considerable bargaining power. Politics therefore neutralises these forms of solidaristic resistance, rendering them insecure and thus 'agreeable' to the requirements of profit and economic growth.

The entity that might have fulfilled these obligations to the poor— the welfare state — has lost 'a large part of its sociopolitical utility, and particularly that part which underpinned the

cross-spectrum consensus' (Bauman, 1999: 184). Since capital (productivity, profitability *et cetera*) has increasingly emancipated itself from labour, the welfare state has lost much of its power for intervention. Capitalism is more dominant than it has ever been. Consequently, the social state cannot be assumed to be the pre-eminent site for implementation of a BI. This is a rather large crack in the logic of Offe *et al's* argument. For some time the idea that the welfare state should help the plight of the poor and make their return to work as swift as possible, was genuinely a beyond left and right issue. Nowadays, however, this has been replaced by the weakly contested assumption that it is not about ameliorating the condition of the poor 'but about getting rid of the poor; deleting them or making them vanish from the agenda of public concern' (Ibid., 185). If we consider the contemporary approach to the poor in the Anglo-Saxon world, we see that 'welfare to work' (UK) and 'welfare to workfare' (US) results 'In a fast –shrinking number of 'people on the dole' and perhaps even a gradual evaporation of the morally painful issue of the 'dependent poor' ' (Ibid.). This is useful to the political class because if the poor can be brushed under the carpet through superfluous job creation schemes and the actuarial operation of 'shifting social wages to subsidies' (Ibid.), it makes it more difficult to 'detect the enormous social costs of the kind of modernization which is set in motion and guided by the price of shares and interests of shareholders' (Ibid.).

As will be discussed later, Bauman thinks we must look elsewhere for an agency capable of translating BI into political reality. This presupposes the construction of new global apparatus capable of intervening in economic forces that have cut themselves free from political powers. Such an apparatus is required because the globalisation of economic power has not been matched by an equally powerful globalisation of political power. As George Monbiot states in the opening paragraph of *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (2003) 'everything has been globalized except our consent. Democracy alone has been confined to the nation state. It stands at the national border, suitcase in hand, without a passport' (2003: 1). For Bauman, it seems unlikely that a BI could find a planetary-wide purchase unless it expressed at the extraterritorial level by an entity sufficiently powerful to put it through.

Critique 3: The costs of the BI are calculated in order to show that it is affordable and therefore plausible.

Out of all of the objections Bauman makes this critique seems the most fanciful and unreasonable. Surely a sensible advocate of any idea must demonstrate its feasibility (whether this be political, financial or ethical) in order for it to have a realistic chance of being realised. However, Bauman's insights here are very interesting because he makes us realise that what is regarded as 'feasible' and 'plausible' are highly politicised and negotiable concepts. The appeal to advancing the BI along the lines of feasibility alone appears increasingly jejune and does not survive closer examination.

Bauman suggests that all those arguments couched in terms of 'affordability' willy-nilly imply the acceptance of the 'social-state' as, essentially, the transfer of money from those who earn it to those who don't' (1999: 185). The consequences of this are multiple. It continues a restrictive 'doxa-tic'⁹ type of thought that makes it seem right that a super elite minority of wealthy individual's possess incomprehensible portions of global wealth¹⁰ To paraphrase Gorz it justifies the arrangement of social time and space that privileges working activity above a range of possible activities. It sustains the idea that it is acceptable for this elite minority to control both the ownership and allocation of the resources that we all need to reproduce ourselves on a daily basis. The self-same resources that we require to maintain a meaningful and satisfying existence. It makes it acceptable that the realm of heteronomy is purposefully swollen, simply to keep us working to produce things we do not need. It therefore denies us the choice of distancing ourselves from waged-labour and consumerism, when in fact we could have more time for more autonomous self-provision.¹¹ It also makes social gain and social worth dovetail with market value.

⁹ An idea which has achieved the status of *doxa* refers to 'an idea we think with but not about' (Bauman, 2002: 136), an idea that sketches 'the unexamined frame for all further cognition' (Bauman, 2001: 45). Or put another way, Pierre Bourdieu suggests *doxa* is 'an evidence not debated and undebatable' (Cited in Bauman, 1998a: 99). The danger of 'doxa-tic' thought is that it engenders one way of conceiving of this world at the expense of other views. Even within reflexive plural symposiums like BIEN this can still occur.

¹⁰ To give just one example of the kind of income concentration we are talking about:

we find that the wealth of the richest 191 individuals was just slightly greater than the total income of the low-income countries, which according to the UNDP's figures accounted for 40% of the world's population.' (Frankman, 2004: 11)

¹¹ It has been well documented that working time has been artificially inflated, and that is more than possible to work significantly less than we do. For example, the total volume of work in the advanced capitalist societies has been artificially maintained, even

The downside of the affordability approach stems from the fact that it focuses on the feasibility of the BI in discursive economic parameters that have already been delineated and sealed.¹² Evidently, arguments that pertain to questions of affordability are highly problematic. Inevitably they involve an acceptance of a welfarist social state and the tendency of its logic to be increasingly rooted in a neo-liberal context. Affordability consolidates many hegemonic relations, undermining and concealing the emancipatory potentials that are buried in society.

Surely, in order to advance the BI proposal as effectively and quickly as possible, the arbitrariness of these myths needs to be exposed. We ought to be revealing economic impossibility for the impostor that it is. However, the approach of Offe *et al* unwittingly and ‘obliquely reconfirms [the] validity [of these myths] while refraining from meeting them point-blank.’ (Bauman, 1999: 185). Forever being strategically minded, Bauman argues that demystifying these assumptions is crucial to the success of a BI. So it is self-defeating not to unveil these myths for the contingent ideas that they are. As counter-intuitive as this sounds, arguing within the paradigm of affordability may make the BI chances *weaker rather than stronger*.

Even if the BI were to be ushered in under an accountancy-style discourse, the BI will not be free from future problems. For the affordability approach ‘will burden [the BI] with a potentially terminal blemish tremendously difficult to erase and will thus store up trouble for the future.’ (Ibid., 185). Rather than being a radical transformative proposal it will be consigned to a life of ‘haggling and log-rolling’ (Ibid.). If we condemn the BI to such a future we will have wasted many opportunities, in particular to radically ‘renegotiate the meaning of the polity and of citizenship’ (Ibid., 186). Do we wish to commit ourselves to a future of squabbling over the scraps from the carcass of a once magnificent proposal? Of course Bauman accepts that the BI is not the ultimate panacea.¹³ Still, we do not want to fritter away the possibility of advancing a proposal capable of cultivating a political context more conducive to further radicalisation. If so,

inflated, by low pay: forcing people to work longer, the expansion of unproductive labour in the service sector and the production of the superfluous (Lodziak; *Capital & Class*; 72, 2000: 128; Rifkin, 1996) and what Finn Bowring suggests is ‘the absorption of labour by destructive, defensive and unsustainable forms of production’ (*Sociology*; 33:1, 1999: 77-79), epitomised by job creation schemes

¹² This is why Bauman’s perspective is of value; it keeps us interrogating our suppositions and performing what Sartre thought was a vital ethical act *of thinking against one’s self*.

¹³ For example, he suggests that:

a basic income by itself would leave quite a few unprepossessing side-effects of consumer society unaffected. Indeed, the issue of scarcity and the ultimate finitude of earth resources it unlikely to be resolved by a BI.’ (Bauman, 1999: 187).

why assign the BI to political mediocrity and such abbreviated horizons? Our aspirations for it should be greater. This is why Bauman's argument *matters*, because he makes us realise just how high the stakes are for the BI. Likewise, Van Parijs has been at pains to stress that the BI could significantly improve the human condition (2001: 3). The importance of this can hardly be over-stated.

Gorz also shares similar concerns. He feels that the transformative power of a BI will be diluted by the orthodox approach of satisfying the criteria of affordability. He thinks that too much energy can be spent pandering to the demands of 'economic realism' and therefore surrendering too much ground to the dominant economic model: neo-liberalism. As a consequence the deliberative space given to other innovative ideas is diminished. This contention can be linked to the fact that the BI performs one very important function: it 'provide[s] us with the distance from the existing state of affairs which allows us to judge what we are doing in the light of what we *could* or *should* do' (Gorz, 1999: 113). In other words, it allows us to break out of the constraints of 'doxa-tic' thought. This is a key quality of the BI: 'it reflects the most basic and advanced meaning of present developments' (Ibid., 91). A BI engenders a dynamic philosophical tension that could be very constructive. It allows us to consider what has been, what is, and what can be in our lives. This tension posits the possibility for the consideration and realisation of what can be better than what is now. However, by kowtowing to the demands of external (contingent) criteria, this constructive tension is sidelined and its heuristic value is obscured. Whereas, if we step outside of the neo-liberal paradigm we can escape its stranglehold on the political imagination. In this new context, other possibilities emerge. To give an example, the BI helps illuminate the futility and stupidity of a society that conceals and squanders its own emancipatory potential.¹⁴ As Gorz argues the BI provides a counter logic to the absurdity of a system that makes tremendous savings in working time, but destroys the potential of this time for those who save it, because it supposedly 'cannot' and will not redistribute this saved time. Nor can it equitably redistribute the wealth produced, and fundamentally it is a social system that does not recognise the 'intrinsic value of leisure and time for higher activities' (Ibid., 91).

¹⁴ As post-capitalist thinkers consistently argue, the possibility of transcending capitalism is inherent in the very development of that system. This possibility of moving beyond capitalism does not exist outside of capitalism, as some abolitionist approaches would have us believe. The latent possibilities within capitalism can act as a road to a different society. We can take a capitalist road to a post-capitalist society.

What the preceding discussion does is to encourage us to think more deeply about what we mean when we talk about the affordability of any proposal. Affordability can take on the mantle of neutrality. We need to be demonstrating the opposite and remain mindful that considering the affordability of any given idea is not value-neutral endeavour. Discussions of affordability are grounded within certain (epistemological and ontological) conditions, and therefore certain limits. This is obvious when we discuss the affordability of a proposal within a neo-liberal framework. Here there are automatic assumptions invoked by this economic model. For example, one typical assumption is that we should not attempt to intervene in the workings of the market. Going along with this means that the neo-liberal model continues to dictate what is and what is not regarded as feasible. However, this is just the kind of thinking that advocates of the BI need to break free from. Surely these individuals should be trying to subvert the parameters of economic possibility and thus feasibility in a direction that is more favourable to the realisation of the BI. And in doing this they should avoid compromising its key characteristics, hence maximising its potential.

The thought of Jürgen Habermas is germane to this discussion. He suggests that we should be doing the exact opposite to the neo-liberal mantra of non-intervention into the market. We should adopt a less deferent attitude towards the market. We should shun the ‘rules’ that corroborate the neo-liberal fantasy that the market is beyond control. A key aspect of emancipatory politics for him then, is to be bolder and ‘find out how much strain the economic system can be made to take in directions that might benefit social needs’ (Habermas, 1990: 18).

Why should proponents of the BI feel compelled to justify the BI on terms set by others, which are in no way more legitimate than their own? For instance Glyn Daly (1999; 2004) has suggested that it is not as if the economy exists in some extra-discursive realm, unsullied by politics and human agency. The same point is made in excellent fashion by Hardt and Negri:

Many of the proponents and detractors of the present world order conceive of globalization as if it were determined by an unregulated capitalism – with free markets and free trade – which often goes by the name of “Neoliberalism”. A brief trip to snow-covered Davos, however, can help dispel this notion of an unregulated capitalism because there we can see clearly the need for leaders of major corporations to negotiate and cooperate with the political leaders of the dominant-nations, and the bureaucrats of the supranational economic institutions. And there too we can see that the national and global levels of political and economic control do not, in fact, conflict with each other but actually work together hand in glove. At Davos, in short, we can see the institutional

relationship that support and regulate the global political economic system. That is a nerve centre of the global body politic... In more general terms, it [Davos] demonstrates that *no economic market can exist without political order and regulation.* (2004: 167)

In other words, the economy is not value neutral or a form of *autopoiesis*, which naturally and divinely sprang forth spontaneously *ab nihilo* - out of nothingness.¹⁵ This distinct lack of recursion is visible in the economics of Western governments who rarely question their own economic reason. A classic example of this is when neo-liberal governments champion economic growth without factoring into their calculations hidden costs or externalities (i.e., economic activity that is damaging to the environment and the health of human populations), as an eco-social rationality would encourage us to do. Economics is thus a hegemonic struggle over what is possible and what is not. Economic 'impossibility' is merely a social construct. It is a negotiable and potentially shiftable frontier rather than a transhistorically fixed boundary. Insights such as these are important because they provide a philosophical egress that prevents appeals to impossibility circumscribing our political hopes and desires. The value of Bauman's argument is that it performs an act of philosophical rupture, which punctures the integument that surrounds hegemonic economic thinking, in such a way that new possibilities are opened up.¹⁶

¹⁵ For instance Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (1995) emphasises the arbitrariness of arguments that suggest systems are transhistorical, by dismantling their normative, reproductive and self-validating basis. He achieves this by making the obvious observation that there was once a pre-capitalist era, and that capitalism's evolution is significantly tied in with the dynamic of human agency. Moreover, all systems, in order to exist, have to repress their opposites and exclude antagonistic antithetical forces. Systems are defined by what they are not – X is defined by its not X. (Daly, 1999: 83). Negativity is thus the life-blood of positivity. The positivisation (*becoming*) of a system can only take place in relation to an irreducible negativity. This is what Derrida means when he talks of the 'constitutive outside': to have an inside there needs to be an outside. Hence, *De nihilo nihilum, in nihilum nil posse reverti* (nothing can come from nothing, nothing can return to nothing). Furthermore, it is why Derrida discusses 'the violence of the law before the law' (1996: 83), in other words as the law became sedimented over time, it laid more and more law on top of itself. As a result the law now appears as if it has always been present. However, in its nascent state the early legislators performed violent acts of exclusion and repression in order to constitute that which is legal and that which is not legal. In this way, we can see that systems tend to conceal their fundamental constitutive dimension – the Political or *Le politique* (Lefort, 1989: 11) - the radical dimension in every system, which shows the:

contingent nature of all structuring principles...To make the same point in different terms: all systems are ultimately 'arbitrary' (i.e. historical rather than ontological) insofar as they originate from an essential condition of Undecidability (Daly, 2004: 3).

Systems tend to hide their own ontological contingency as well as their lack of foundation or point of origin, when really they are configured out of a hegemonic-discursive struggle. As a result of the dimension of *the political*, systems can never be fully mastered and as a consequence they are prone to failure and crisis, and reconstitution. When this observation is applied to the economy we begin to see that the hegemony of economic reality is actually *protean*.

¹⁶ Here it is interesting to consider the psychoanalytic notion of *the act*, an idea which Slavoj Žižek employs. *The act* refers to the moment when psychoanalytic methods aimed at *cathexing* an idea, fantasy or memory that traumatizes an individual are successful. The cathexing of these sources of psychic discomfort means that they are transferred in a cathartic way to a psychic space from which they can no longer interfere with the well-being of that individual. As a consequence the individual is then able to radically reformulate the precise nature of their trauma in a way that allows them to break out of the destructive economy of being, which that trauma has hitherto forced them to inhabit. Thus they can experience themselves differently and with less

Consequently, there is a need to engage in a hegemonic-power struggle over the meaning of political economy and reactivate it in a more radical form. Politicising impossibility is very important since today we are blighted by the timorous politics of *impossibility*. A more disturbing result of this kind of impossibility is the notion that we exist in a post-political world, where further politicisation is rendered impossible. This kind of thinking consolidates and perpetuates the pervasive ideology contained in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous dictum that 'There Is no Alternative' (TINA) to neo-liberal capitalism. This is mirrored in the French-speaking world where the notion of '*la pensée unique*' – one way of thinking – has become quite dominant (See: Touraine: 2001).¹⁷

The significance of the foregoing discussion on the BI, is that it encourages us to side step the grip of economic orthodoxy, but still Bauman thinks we should transcend it more thoroughly. Admittedly, the preceding discussion demonstrates that BI theorists exist in a kind of catch-22 situation as they would be accused of naivety and being out of touch if they did not couch the BI in a context which recognises the conditions of the present.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that affordability does not exist in a value neutral paradigm. When discussing affordability within the rationality of capitalism there is a danger of conceding too much ground to neo-liberal thinkers and their attempts to monopolise the idea of economic rationality, as the pre-eminent rationality. In other words, once you start arguing for what is feasible in terms of what the current system will afford you, you have already lost your argument; you have stopped developing your argument. What Bauman's argument hints at but does not express clearly and strongly enough, is that there is a need to foreground and affirm a politics of rationality, which does not lie on the exclusive terrain of neo-liberal rationality. In

psychic distress. This occurs because there is realisation that things do not have to be the way they are. In a similar way, the recognition that impossibility with regards to the economy is merely a human construct is also a vital performance of *the act*. Through this act the reality of the economy can be transformed in a *Real* sense. Daly explains that the effect of *the act* is to engender:

a basic rupture in the weave of reality that opens up new possibilities and creates the space for a reconfiguration of reality itself. Like the miracle, the act is ultimately unsustainable – it cannot be reduced to, or incorporated directly within, the symbolic order. Yet it is through the act that we touch (and are touched by) the Real in such a way that the bonds of our symbolic universe are broken and that an alternative construction is enabled; reality is transformed in a Real sense. (Daly, Forthcoming: 18)

¹⁷ This political reasoning manifests itself in various forms and is informed by influential theories such as Francis Fukuyama's historical teleology (1992); the 'Third Way' approach of Anthony Giddens (1998) which has found many outlets and willing recipients. To a considerable extent it has also penetrated the thought of some of our more profound contemporary thinkers. For example, it finds expression in Habermas' notion of deliberative democracy (1995) which reasons that through rationalised deliberative debate the fundamental tensions between democracy and liberalism can be forever reconciled. Ulrich Beck's New Enlightenment (1998) and the notion that we can have a democracy without enemies is another such disappointing capitulation to the seductive notion that we can permanently transcend antagonism, and enter a post-political world.

other words, we subvert economic rationality beyond capitalisms' existing economic logic. We demonstrate that others forms of economic rationality are also of value. For example, the approach of the greens and post-industrial socialists is not devoid of rationality. Rather they present a different rationality, which Gorz has described as an 'eco-social' rationality that is just as legitimate as that of neo-liberal rationality.¹⁸ However, if we are seriously interested in achieving this, we will need to politicise this rationality to such an extent that it becomes the hegemonic rationality. Such an approach basically means that we must reformulate economic/non-economic relations in such a way that serves social need and a protected egalitarian world. This could mean the development of a more radical kind of economic diversity (beyond monopoly capital, standardisation; Microsoft, Disney *et cetera*) that rejects the relentless pursuit of profit as the only goal. For example, take the instructive notion of an entrepreneur. In the current context this connotes a dynamic individual who by dint of her own struggle and creativity manages to innovatively fashion new opportunities for profit making. However, if economic conditions were reformulated these innovative skills could easily be re-routed to serve non-market goals such as innovatively meeting social needs. Entrepreneurship does not have to be the sole preserve of activity in the sphere of commodity exchange.

To recap then, the very discursive framework that some BIEN thinkers have placed around the BI could limit its radical transformative potential. This is not to accuse BIEN of being unreceptive to new ideas, but rather to suggest that a kind of subtle consensus has begun to crystallise that needs to be tempered somewhat. In order to radicalise this approach, the debate could be developed towards the discussion of the BI working in conjunction with or through other radical strategy proposals, such as: work time reduction policy and the redistribution of work, (Gorz, 1985; 1994; Hayden, 1999) the regulation of capitalism on a global scale in the form of a non-capitalist regulator of global capitalism (See: Lodziak, 2002: 175-176) empowered with the capability for global taxation of capital flows, trade and production control (i.e. with the ability to enforce the norm of 'fair swaps' of goods rather than modes of exchange underpinned

¹⁸ For example Gorz has neatly summarized this rationality, which would subordinate economic rationality to different eco-social needs:

[Individuals can] emancipate themselves not by abolishing capital and the sphere of economically rational commodity activities...but by *assigning them a limited subaltern function* in the development of society. In other words the societal objective of productivity gains must be to bring about a contraction of the sphere governed by economic calculation and an expansion of self-determined, self-organized spheres of activity in which human faculties can develop freely. (*My emphasis*, 1994: 20)

by the profit motive) and the means for *ex ante* planning on a macro-continental scale.¹⁹ Admittedly, this is all very utopian. But history shows that utopianism plays an important function in bringing forth great social change.

Having said all of this, the conventional approach of BI theorists may be more strategically astute and shrewd than it first appears. The intention may be to introduce a partial watered-down BI into capitalist society. Ostensibly this would be articulated as a conventional welfare policy, but surreptitiously used as a lever to promote other non-/post-capitalist policies and socialities once it becomes a more substantial income. In this view the BI would be a kind of decoy or Trojan horse, introducing an important post/non-capitalist principle into society, which might eventually significantly change society. However, it is unlikely to be experienced as too disturbing to the politically squeamish, because it will not appear as some radical systemic break or unsettling capitalist/post-capitalist shift. Furthermore, it would not overtly violate the social norm of reciprocity: where the connection between work performed and income earned is of paramount importance for many people, and the transgression of this norm is inviolable and unthinkable at this present time in a society which values the (almost atavistic) *quid pro quo* ethic very highly.²⁰ To entertain the possibility of this norm receding would require a significant cultural mutation. Then again, introducing a BI as a Trojan horse could mean that it is easily co-opted and perverted by the system. There is no guarantee that a modified partial BI would automatically develop into a full one. It could easily become a wage directed a certain number of the population, and one intended to stay with just this sector. Hence, we return to Bauman's consistent argument that the BI must not be diluted, it must be articulated as a vision guided strategy. If we want a BI we should just make it happen would be Bauman's attitude; we must make it a priority and privilege it in our socio-economic planning. If we cannot identify an existing agency to bring it into being, we must seek out other alternatives, and other ways of advancing the goal. We must not be limited by the reality of the present. To speak in bathetic terms Bauman's argument represents a kind of punk philosophical approach that gives a two-fingered salute to economic thinking, since he regards contemporary economic thinking as the

¹⁹ Having said that Myron Frankman who has presented several papers at the BEIN biannual congress, has made a genuine attempt to do this. For instance he has explored how a planet-wide citizen's income could be advanced by democratic world federalism, a single global currency, and the development of global public finance mechanisms. (2004)

²⁰ However, some have attempted to argue that even those individuals who do not work and only consume still contribute to value in society and this therefore could entitle them to economic rights such as BI. (See: Caputo, 2004).

source of the problem in the first place. It may sound reckless and naïve to some, but he goes to great lengths to stake out his position in a compelling and thoughtful manner. In fairness however, some key members of BEIN acknowledge the arbitrariness of economic thinking and the importance of an historical perspective on social change. On the same topic, Guy Standing reminds us of Albert Hirschman's wise observation that all great progressive ideas are denounced through three typical objections:

through the claim of *futility* (it cannot be done), the claim of *jeopardy* (if done, it would endanger other goals) and the claim of *perversity* (if done, the unintended consequences would undermine the benefits). Once introduced, many reforms previously opposed on those grounds have soon been seen as normal and civilised. (2005: xiv – xv)

The same might apply to the concept of a BI. All progressive social change is objected to on the grounds of impossibility, and when that change actually comes to pass, we find that what seemed unreasonable and audacious becomes common sense and a regular part of our lives that we rarely think twice about.

Nevertheless, Bauman's approach is one that makes an appeal to aim for an instantaneous and immediate approach to implementing a BI. Clearly then, there is a need to discuss the merits of this approach against others.

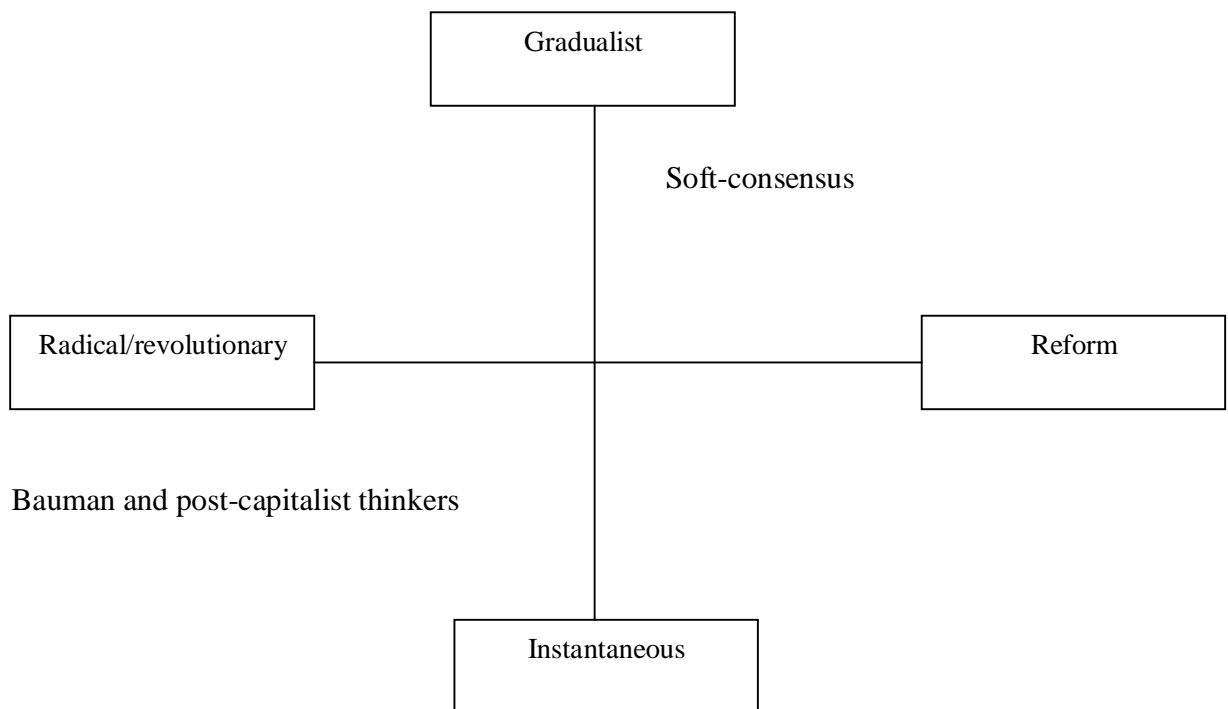
A BI Typology

The difference between Bauman and some protagonists of the BI is one that can be graduated by the distinction between radical/revolutionary reform and reforming reform. But this is still a rather reductive model. There is a need to dispense with a simple bi-polar spectrum. Hence, I wish to distance myself from what might be regarded as a regurgitation of a transversal political spectrum approach, one that juxtaposes radical/revolutionary against reform. We must not reduce the typology down to a one-dimensional plane. There is a need to develop a further typology that encapsulates the complexity of the positions that exist on the subject of the BI. This is not a straightforward process, because one of the significant problems with the BI is that it has been articulated in different ways and there is division within the community of theorists,

over what kind of strategy would best engender a full BI.²¹ One distinctive feature of each of these positions is that in and of themselves they are also differentiated by their approach to *the speed of the politics* they intend to set in motion. Hence we can insert a vertical axis into the conceptual model I am attempting to develop (see: Figure 1 below).

In reality, BI theorists represent various positions in this two dimensional typology. Although, the majority are most likely to be located in the top right-hand quadrant: the gradualist-reformist position. This is where the ‘soft’ consensus seems to exist, and from Bauman it is where the problem exists. He wants to flip this over so that the majority exist in instantaneous revolutionary quadrant. This diagrammatic representation is useful in helping us conceptualise these differing positions in a more tangible way. But obviously the typology cannot fully capture the nuances of opinion.²² Nonetheless, a cross-sectional analysis at least gives us a more intelligible picture of the different tendencies operating within the BIEN symposium.

Figure 1: A Two-dimensional Typology of Positions on a BI.



²¹ For instance, should it be launched in its pure form from the start or is it more strategically advantageous to drop or sublimate the idea of a full and generous BI until a more opportune political climate materialises, so as not to negate the potential of the idea before it has even started. Some BI theorists argue that the necessary pre-requisite for a fully-fledged BI would be a Eurodividend or Participatory Income (Veen & Groot, 2000: 27). In this prefigurative approach a transitional or partial BI is required to reach a full and generous one.

²² A further fault-line across the movement could represent one concerning the degree of conditionality/unconditionality that a thinker advocates for a BI.

While each of these positions on the two-dimensional typology has its respective merits, Bauman feels that given the current political-historical conjuncture the radical/revolutionary and instantaneous position is most suitable for the political articulation of a BI. How reasonable is this?

Bauman certainly does not think we can introduce a BI over night. But this is by no means a reason to locate it too far away in our political aspirations and time horizons. To be more precise, he stresses that we should aim to be as immediate as we can with it. This staves off the possibility of the BI becoming a proposal that becomes too modest, or is re-routed to serve non-emancipatory goals or reappropriated and used for other purposes.²³ As Gorz, argues a BI could easily be reappropriated by the political right and used as a 'social wage for compulsory passivity' (1985: 40). In other words, it used as hush money. Therefore, if we do not cede too much ground by justifying the BI on terms set by others (those with an interest in undermining it) political ambitions are not abbreviated and the gains that can be made will not be reduced. And most importantly the proposal will be less vulnerable to politically damaging co-option.

What Bauman is asking us to do then, is not to throw caution to the wind, but temper the consensus and norms that have gathered around the concept of gradualism and encourage us to re-radicalise this consensus, and have a greater sense of urgency. Bauman is fairly explicit in how we should do this and thinks it is futile to comply with political-economic reality or what is considered as political-economic reality. For example, should we really bother to advance the BI through conventional means such as the social state? *So what would be required to advance the kind of instantaneous revolutionary BI that he proposes?* Bauman has so far only critiqued the

²³ In a similar fashion Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in their book *Empire* (2000), that the ethic of humanitarianism has been recuperated by dominant powers and redirected for their means. For instance, although humanitarianism started out as a well-intentioned idea, it has now been pilfered by the U.S., and used to justify interventions in foreign territories on the grounds of *bellum justum* (i.e. just war) when clearly selfish and less righteous interests are being served.

To give another edifying example, capitalist enterprise did a similar thing with the psychoactive chemically-induced hedonism of 1960's counterculture. This movement threatened to challenge the dominant values essential to the reproduction of capitalism, such as the centrality of waged work and the work ethic. Capitalism skillfully neutered this movement, recuperating its anti-establishment kudos for commercial gain, using hippified imagery to sell products. In fact, at the symbolic level, in the economy of the sign, capitalism's political and public relations wing, international marketing, has proved adept at converting and gentrifying radical symbolism into highly saleable commodity. In other words, capitalism has therefore learned to be recursive and invert the threat of oppositional logic. It deiconoclasticises the iconoclasts. It has performed an act of *détournement* on the politics of *détournement*: it subvertises the subvertisers, busts the adbusters and jams the culture-jammers. This is why Hardt and Negri suggest that capitalism can 'manage hybrid identities' and absorb resistances, contradictions and tensions with aplomb (2000: 2). So why help the dominant powers by watering-down an idea such as the BI before it is even anywhere near political realisation?

existing approach to the BI. Therefore it is reasonable to enquire about the efficacy of the recommendations he makes for a BI?

Critical Appraisal of Bauman's Recommendations for a BI

As was hinted earlier, the essential predicament of forwarding a BI on the grounds that Bauman recommends boils down to the problem of praxis and more precisely the identification of a suitable *agency*. He recognises this and suggests that 'under the current conditions it is difficult to find an agency potent enough to put the idea through' (Bauman, 1999: 190). In addition, the existing global political architecture is straining to cope with the complexities of the modern era. Its cause has not been helped by the firm blows that have been delivered by the U.S. and its vassalage states (i.e., the U.K.), which have deliberately attempted to undermine and wrest power away from the rest of the world. While the UN may be moving in a direction of arguing that human rights should also come to encompass economic rights conducive to basic economic security, it is nowhere near a situation where it could make a global BI reality.²⁴ Having said that Frankman has shown that even within the existing aid budgets of developed countries, a modest planetary-wide BI could be financed (2004). Likewise, Rolf Kunnemann, has also demonstrated that freedom from hunger is more than affordable even within the miserly aid budgets of the advanced capitalist societies (2004). Food security is more than achievable. This is hardly a novel observation; in the 1970's Herbert Marcuse suggested that capitalism possesses 'a social wealth sufficient to abolish poverty [and] the technical know-how to develop the available resources systematically toward this goal' (1972: 7).²⁵ We need to develop an argument that highlights the abundance that exists within capitalism, which will grant more latitude to the generosity and extensiveness of the BI we might bring into being. The excesses of capitalism could be subverted in a direction in which greater basic security is generated. In Bauman's view capitalism produces more than enough wealth for each and every individual to live in conditions of basic economic security. And in its emerging post-industrial, post-Fordist forms it has

²⁴ This is because a proposal with potentially as radical implications as the BI will not be supported by the one remaining super power nor the other advanced capitalist states, and certainly not at the supra-continental level. As Monbiot (2003) shows, the U.S. possesses veto power in both the UN and World Bank (2003: 16; 69 - 71). In fact the G8 countries possess 48 *per cent* of the votes within the World Bank giving *carte blanche* for veto. In addition the superior financial might of these countries means that smaller countries votes can easily be bought with the promise of much needed aid packages on a *quid pro quo* basis. Therefore preventing these countries from supporting proposals that are patently in their people's self-interests.

²⁵ Here is a good example of the problem of the affordability debate. We are already sucked into the discursive paradigm of affordability pitched at the level of necessity, and the possibility of BI resourcing a post-sufficiency life remains undebated.

unmasked tremendous emancipatory openings, which could be harnessed to promote much greater possibilities for enhanced well-being than have hitherto existed. The argument that this is not so, is one of the greatest and most effective neo-liberal myths.

Still, the pivotal problem for Bauman's approach is that 'the truly potent powers of today are essentially exterritorial' (1999), while the sites of political action remain hopelessly local. The separation of power from politics, or what Habermas refers to as the migration of politics 'from the life-world into the political system' (1986: 179) is a real problem. Contemporary politics is quite poor in acting as bridge between civil society and the state, hence we have the emergence of political fatalism (i.e., a 'what's the point' attitude); what Habermas refers to as 'civic privatism'. This manifests itself in apathy/antipathy towards mainstream politics and general withdrawal into privatism and consumerism. This intensifies the widening gap between economically globalised power and political power rooted in actual territorial locales. As Habermas argues 'civil privatism thus corresponds to the structures of a depoliticised public realm.' (Habermas, 1973: 75). Subsequently, the course of world affairs 'stays essentially 'out of bounds and out of control, acquiring a quasi-elemental, unplanned, unanticipated, spontaneous and contingent character' (Bauman, 1999: 191).

To give a hypothetical example of why this is a problem: if an individual nation-state wished to push through a significant BI proposal it would encounter many problems. This could result in it becoming a political and economic pariah. Firstly, to finance a significant BI *might* mean the taxation of capital flows or super-income earners. In all likelihood this would result in this country being branded as troublesome. A stigmatisation such as this could provoke highly destabilising capital flight, and the possibility of economic attacks and sabotage by those agencies that do not look favourably on moves to create a more protected egalitarian world. It is likely that the nation-state in question would undergo a kind of 'Cubanisation' where both tacit and overt trade barriers would ensue. Therefore transforming that state into a heretic and autarkic outcast. *Ex ante* co-ordination between a regional constellation of states would be the only way to avert fiscal and social competition between neighbours. Otherwise we would be left with a situation that Bauman calls 'negative competition'. Bauman illustrates the repercussions of what would happen if a state was to go it alone by referring to the instructive American example:

Once welfare ceased to be a federal issue, the 'negative competition' between the states took off, each state trying to outdo its neighbours in niggardliness, in cutting down

welfare services and making access to them more onerous and humiliating – each state being scared of turning into a ‘welfare magnet’ if it happened to be more generous in its provisions’ (1999: 191)

So if the state did go it alone it also risks the very real possibility of becoming a ‘welfare magnet’, if it happened to be more generous in its provisions. In the context of the EU, where borders are porous for EU citizens, and where these individuals can seek domicile and work in member countries, this could be a problem. It is important to recognise that a state, or constellation of states, pursuing a BI agenda would be extremely attractive to impoverished people. These people already risk their lives to enter ‘fortress Europe’, in spite of an often hostile reception and meagre financial assistance. With the added attraction of a substantial and generous BI this trend might be amplified. Having said this, the absolutely impoverished, those struggling to survive on daily basis can barely leave their immediate locales let alone their country (See: Harris, 2002).

To avoid such possibilities might ultimately require a revised and transformed North-South relationship. Disregarding the obvious and compelling ethical exigencies of addressing the inequalities between the global North and South, from a pragmatic perspective Bauman thinks the BI will have to be developed with an internationalist outlook, accompanied by an additional strategy aimed at altering the inequity of this relationship. Hence, Bauman draws the conclusion that the nation-state is *at present* the ‘sole legislating agency technically able to undertake the introduction of a basic wage (within its sovereign territory) of course, [but] it is simultaneously singularly incapable of doing this on its own’ (1999: 191), because of the supremacy of globalised economic power. In such a context, what right thinking state would go it alone? Globalised power has the nation state by the jugular. Bauman therefore concludes that only concerted continental or supra-continental action can prevent such outcomes:

Politics must catch up with power which has cut itself free to roam in the politically uncontrolled space – and for that purpose it must develop instruments allowing it to reach the spaces through which those powers ‘flow’ (to deploy Manuel Castells’ term). Nothing less is needed than an international republican institution on a scale commensurate with the scale of transnational powers’ operation. Or, as Alain Gresh put it recently in an article commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Communist manifesto – what is needed is a ‘new internationalism’. (Ibid., 192)

While there is some talk within BIEN of global taxation of capital flows and the development of a global currency that could compete with the hegemony of the dollar, the problem of agency still persists. And this is one of the important residual features that Bauman's argument leaves in its wake. More of an effort has to be made by BI activist to branch out and connect with other groups, rather than just at an academic, governmental and institutional level. We need organisations that articulate the BI in a brief, succinct and reasonably argued explanations that have universal existential appeal.²⁶ Having said this, it would be insensitive not to recognise that BIEN have their own work and personal obligations, and it might be unfair to expect them to combine their other commitments with a full-time activist role. In saying this, at the discursive hegemonic level more effort should be made to steer the debate in such a direction.

For example, how can we activate interest in the BI in the massive political force of the 'non-party of non voters' (Beck, 1998)? Admittedly, at present this hardly constitutes a coherent political movement. Still, glimpses of significant political stirrings are visible. This is especially evident at the World and European Social Forums.²⁷ Nonetheless, BIEN could explore the continental forums as a possible avenue of change along with conventional means.²⁸ For example, could it be that Hardt and Negri's notion of 'the multitude' (2000; 2004) - the radical and diffuse subjectivity they identify within capitalism and bestow with tremendous transformative potential - clearly visible at these forums, could have some bearing on the future of the BI? Might not the BI provide a pole of coherence and garner a political movement around this idea, so much so that pressure is exerted on mainstream politics and economic power so that change follows.²⁹ Perhaps the hesitancy to engage and operate though this means is because these forums are too radical and may damage the hard-won credibility that the BI has obtained over recent years. This may be put down to the fact that these movements have engaged in significant

²⁶ In fairness Van Parijs has suggested elsewhere that there is need to compose a book for the layperson, so that the BI can broaden its audience.

²⁷ Over the last decade many political commentators have observed the development of this new kind of politics. It is one that operates by and through a minoritarian logic. This new politics expresses itself in a horizontal fashion, as opposed to the vertical, arborescent, sedentary and striated kind implicit in the majoritarian logic that is a 'government in waiting' (Tormey, 2004: 153) - i.e. viz the Bolshevik storming of the White Palace scenario. A minoritarian political model or rhizomatic non-model is a dispersed, disaggregated and decentred movement that manifests itself in one location only to evaporate and reappear elsewhere and elsewhere. Intrinsic to this logic is the rejection of political organisation through hierarchy, and the idea of an alternative system that must be modeled and developed outside of the current system.

²⁸ Admittedly, the Brazilian president Lula Da Silva, whose party has close links with BIEN (and now heads the first fledgling BI state), did help finance the first World Social forum in Porto Alegre. Furthermore, important members of BIEN do recognise the potentially transformative potential of the continental forums. (See: ILO, *Economic Security for a Better World*, 2004: 332)

²⁹ This is not as extreme as it might first sound. George Monbiot has brilliantly outlined in his book *The Age of Consent* (2003), that the continental social forums could evolve to provide an alternative force of intervention, and he proposes a means by which this grassroots power could be translated into real global power (i.e., in the form of a world people's parliament).

(and occasionally violent) civil disobedience. For instance, Standing appears to reflect on these recent insurrections in major metropolis such as Seattle and Genoa, and suggests that:

What was exciting at the turn of the new millennium was that there were signs that anger was reviving. It was messy, incoherent, degenerate sort of anger; most of us, this writer included, *could not identify* with much of what has been happening; and have been riled by some of the excesses. Yet this anger bodes well. It means that there is a discontent about injustice per se. (*My Emphasis*: 2002: xi)

Whilst Standing does not condemn these unconventional forms of politics outright, he neither views them too positively either. Furthermore, he says he cannot identify with them. Although, he does recognise that this discontent should be commandeered in some way. Perhaps more of an effort should be made to connect and identify with the many groups that are encompassed within these new social movements (i.e. anti-capitalist, post-capitalist, ecological *et cetera*) in order to embolden the political chances of the BI, and establish even more broad based support. In a similar fashion, Van Parijs suggests that the case for the BI must be *swollen* and *spread* (2002). Would not connecting with these groups satisfy the latter aspect of this strategic assertion? An economic right such as the BI may just be the kind of proposal that these radical groups could gather around and apply more focused pressure to change society.³⁰ This is because the BI is not an all binding blue-print for another world. Therefore it can traverse the many political position that exist on the radical left without necessarily forcing them to evaporate or absolve their worldview entirely. The BI illustrates perfectly Ernesto Laclau's notion of the 'political surface of significant inscriptions'. This concept refers to a situation where many different groups can sign up to the BI as a way to achieve their more specific demands. The BI could function as a hegemonic pole of resistance and unity – a commonality that connects these (dis)organisations in a non-totalising way. In other words, a BI could be just the kind of radical proposal that these organisations are crying out for, since they seem to be searching for something to suture and galvanise them into a coherent, focused and more self-conscious political assemblage, whilst at the same time retaining their individual identity. However, at present these new movements (or movement of movements) are afflicted by two problems. Firstly, they suffer from 'movementism' or what is also know as 'serial protesting':

³⁰ It is instructive to note that the intellectual double-act Hardt and Negri, who many cite as the philosophical spokespersons for this diverse movement, also argue for a BI for all. Their argument is based on a rationale of historical justice that the multitude is deserving of a BI since without them capital could never exit.

Movementism equates to the view that merely by protesting or blockading important gatherings, significant blows are delivered to the structure of global capitalism, and thus what is needed are more and even larger protests (Tormey, 2004: 149 – 150)

Within this movement there is a recognition that while these large urban insurrections may be spectacular conscience raising exercises, they do not really challenge the structures of power in a tangible way. They are far too transient; and in the words of Hakim Bey they are ‘temporary autonomous zones’ (1991)³¹, which is paradoxically both a strength and a weakness simultaneously. Is it worth protesting merely for the sake of protesting? For example, particularly in the UK, the anti-capitalist movement has made a conscious effort to engage in actual context-specific struggle in order to affect power, and connect with ordinary people in ways that carnivalesque uprising do not do in a sustained manner.³²

Secondly, another problem is that there is a lack of institutionalisation and what Joe Freeman has identified as the ‘tyranny of structurelessness’ (1970). This refers to the fact that many of the groups encompassed under the umbrella-like rubric of anti-capitalism purposefully choose to be ‘(dis)organisations’. By opting to be a form of disorganisation they avoid what they perceive as the inherent injustices and dangers synonymous with hierarchicalised power structures (i.e., the state, corporate business, patriarchal family). A (dis)organisation’ is:

a form of organisation that is non-hierarchical, flat and easily remoulded in terms of shifting needs and priorities. It is a logic orientated towards action over representation, participation over command. Minority politics points towards *horizontal* political practices, and sees resistance developing organically rather than strategically, that is, out of the immediate concerns felt by people and groups in particular locations. (Tormey, 2004: 151).

The problem with such a non-hierarchical and molecular ‘movement’ is that consensual action has to be groundout and therefore it can become cumbersome and lack direction. It is difficult to

³¹ A temporary Autonomous Zone:

is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it. (1991: 101)

³² For instance in the early 1990’s the anti-roads movement forced the Conservative government to perform a large u-turn on its expansive road building programme. This movement was successful because it rooted itself in a local community, who were awaiting eviction. Together they engaged in long-term and successful community resistance against the British state.

move on a coherent political course without some kind of plan. For example, the movement lacks direction because opinion is so diverse that no concerted and focused action can occur. Heterogeneous argumentation can preclude political stasis but it can also result in inertia. In addition to this, this kind of politics is still too local and 'localised actions cannot drain power from power elites. Only coordinated [and sustained] action designed to confront global elites can be effective as a form of resistance' (Ibid., 2004: 166).

Nevertheless, it is possible to maintain that the BI is just the kind of idea that might appeal to these groups. The power of these groups should not be underestimated. Resolute action by this ragged band of international protest organisations meant that the highly significant Multilateral Agreement on Investment was disabled.³³ In addition, action against biotechnology companies resulted in the GM issue being pushed to the fore of public debate, and even resulted in the precipitous fall in the share price of Monsanto. These two examples are testimony to the effectiveness of this diverse movement. Because the BI is vaunted to have multiple desirable effects, it is likely to be appealing to too all shades of the left. Therefore the BI could act as a common theme around which a new and effective European, perhaps global left could unite. This is what Bauman's perspective encourages us to believe.

Of course, Bauman's perspective is not without its problems, and space ought to be given to outlining these deficiencies. For example:

- **Evidence of a new Global Political Architecture is Barely Discernable**

If the global political architecture that he proposes to put through the BI is not even visible yet, what else are theorists of the BI meant to theorise with, other than the extant political structures?

³³ As John Pilger makes clear the MAI would have has significant repercussions:

Behind closed doors, the world's richest nations had been negotiating a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) which would give multinational corporations unprecedented powers over governments and local communities across the world. (2005)

At a stroke it would have given corporations the right to circumvent national environmental and labour law, and any attempt to block their potentially damaging behavior would have meant nation states having to pay compensation to the 'offended' corporation. In his book *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain* (2000, 302 - 330), Monbiot has demonstrated how such a proposal would have granted the same rights to corporations, as those that apply to humans.

- **Immanent Agency Cannot be Relied Upon**

This is a critique aimed at his philosophical reasoning. The problem of a coherent human agency to advance the proposal still persists. There is no immanent logic that guarantees that such a revolutionary subjectivity will come into being. This is a common political mistake. Typically it refers to a Marxian tendency, where the logic of immanence engendered an assumption that capitalism carried within itself a latent force of negation: a force that would inevitably result in capitalism producing its own gravediggers. This belief held that the ontological basis for the abolition of capitalism was embodied by an extant revolutionary subject: the archetypal and polyvalent proletariat who sought the negation of their immiserated state through revolutionary transformation. This subject supposedly had an implicit self-interest in socialism, and when she realised this she would rise up and dismantle capitalism. History shows that we cannot rely on the logic of immanence. And perhaps Bauman's argument would be improved if he steered clear of such reasoning.

- **The Problem of Financial Feasibility Still Persists**

The problem of satisfying requests for demonstrating the affordability of a BI will not disappear. Financing the BI still remains a real issue. Perhaps we need a multifaceted approach to the affordability question, demonstrating that a modest BI is affordable in the here and now, as well as a discourse that outlines the possibility for a more generous and (globally) universal BI. Although, this still leaves room for political co-option and dilution, since power elites would most likely opt for the less troublesome and easily achievable version.

- **The Problem of Political Counter-modelling**

Bauman's argument seems to veer towards the logic of political counter-modelling. Surely to bring the BI closer to political reality, we need to be radicalising the existing structures and agencies of power rather than displacing the avenues for political change, elsewhere and elsewhere to some as of yet unspecified context/entity. Bauman's aim ought not to be to create a new *socialist system*, but to formulate a mode of socio-economic organisation in which non-

systemic autonomous activities and goals are regarded as highly as those which take place within the sphere of market governed activity. Therefore, the move towards a beyond capitalism does not necessarily involve a quantum leap or break to some radical *Other*, where grandiose counter-modelling politics is pursued. Thus if Bauman is interested in operationalising a beyond capitalism he might better achieve such an aim, by conceiving of it as a process of surpassing/transcending (through and by capitalism). In a metaphysical sense, the movement beyond capitalism is perhaps better understood as a reformulation or the taking of an exit route rather than a violent break or rupture.

- **Disengagement with the Political Economy of the Present**

This criticism shares parallels with the previous one. While it is important to critique the neo-liberal notion of globalisation which frames the contemporary BI debate, we should not be too quick so surrender the term ‘globalisation’ to a neo-liberal paradigm. Gorz and Daly also make this point. For example Gorz reasons that:

We should not be fighting globalization as such, seeking to pull back from it; we should rather be fighting within the context of the current globalization, for a different form of globalization. (1999: 16)

Likewise, Daly argues that ‘the left should demand more globalization not less’ (Žižek & Daly, 2004: 17) to undo the ‘widespread repression of those forms of research and development that have real emancipatory potential beyond exclusive profiteering.’ (Ibid.) In other words, by exposing the real potential(s) of globalisation, we also reveal the possibilities for transcending capitalism. Still, even though one can sympathise with Bauman’s impulse to reject affordability. We cannot leave affordability to neo-liberals. We need to articulate the affordability of BI along new lines (i.e. social justice, equity, can we afford not to finance a BI (in terms of social and ecological costs) *et cetera*). So in a sense, perhaps we need to *bend and tweak* the discourse in a more radical direction; one that circumvents hegemonic economic calculus. And to a large extent Bauman’s perspective on the BI does encourage just such an endeavour, but he should be more explicit on this point.

Put another way, we should not let the concept of affordability be monopolised by neo-liberal semanticists alone. There are some lessons of history here that we should heed, and

factor into this critical analysis. For example, Bauman's approach make as similar mistake to the logic employed by the Second International, who did not see 'democracy' as something worth fighting for because it was viewed as irrevocably 'Bourgeois democracy'. They therefore relinquished any opportunity to reclaim it for a different (emancipatory) agenda. In 1930's Germany the power vacuum left over by this capitulation was filled by the political right, and the severe consequences of this hardly needs to be mentioned.

- **Lack of Recognition of Contextual Diversity**

Another critique that could be levelled at Bauman is that his perspective of the BI is too totalising and lacks an awareness of contextual diversity. For instance, a radical instantaneous implementation of a BI may not be that impossible or strange a thing to envisage for the Nordic countries and other nation states with a history of a welfare/social state. Whereas, in a context where the social state is unheard of, other more gradual approaches might be more appropriate. Perhaps Bauman's approach is a bit ethnocentric. He looks at the debate from a perspective far too heavily grounded within the context of the advanced capitalist countries. There is a need to recognise contextual dissonance, i.e. the diversity of stages and circumstances that befall the political implementation of a proposal like the BI. What is possible in one place is not possible in another place. Perhaps a more appropriate way to think about the degree of radicalness and speed with which to advance the BI is encapsulated by Van Parijs' *MAYA* principle.³⁴ He suggests that political and economic feasibility should be based on the idea that we must aim for the *most advanced yet achievable goals* in any given context. This might be the best watchword by which to forward the BI.

Whilst Bauman is encouraging us to avoid the perils of gradualism, Suplicy³⁵ urges us to stay alert to the dangers of instantaneity. He does this, by quoting Martin Luther King's beautiful and eloquent warning against this seductive impulse in his 1963 'I have a Dream' speech, which incidentally was delivered in the midst of incendiary racial tension and the attraction of instantaneity was no doubt very alluring:

³⁴ This idea was delivered at the closing ceremony of the BIEN 2004 conference in Barcelona.

³⁵ It is interesting that on the subject of gradualism, Suplicy quotes Martin Luther King's poetic appeal to resist the temptation of instantaneity and immediacy. This is because Suplicy's differing position from Bauman's, mirrors the difference between King and Malcolm X. At the same time as King was preaching non-violent gradualism, the Black power and civil rights movement also had a less compromising wing: that which was represented by Malcolm X. X's position of 'by any means necessary' can be likened to Bauman's notion of immediacy. Sometimes political trends do come full circle.

This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling or to take the tranquillising drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy... It would be fatal for the nation to overcome the urgency of the moment... But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads to the palace of justice... Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred... Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with *soul force*. (*My emphasis*, cited in Suplicy, 2004)

Suplicy uses this quote to remind us not to set up all those who appear to block out political demands as sources of no-hope. In an almost Ghandian way he recognises that the 'enemy' can be *bent* to our demands. We should not rule out the possibility of assistance from unlikely, seemingly inhospitable sources. We should not burn our bridges. For Suplicy the right path for a BI 'is to move gradually, but rapidly, in the right direction of a full Citizen's Basic Income' (2004: 8). This kind of sense is lacking in the Bauman zero-sum game approach. The utopian realism exuded by Van Parijs and Suplicy may then be a more appropriate way to think of forwarding a BI.

Conclusion

Clearly Bauman is not in denial of the enormity of the task involved in implementing a global BI as an instantaneous and radical measure to develop a protected egalitarian world. Nor does he assume that a BI will automatically provide an exit route to a different society. However there are reasons to be cheerful and optimistic.³⁶ There is clear evidence that *states* - and I emphasise the pluralised sense of *states* - are 'not without the prerequisite levers for changing the

³⁶ Despite the patent obstacles to realising a BI, and a protected egalitarian world beyond capitalism, it seems absurd to unequivocally state that it is not possible. If history teaches us anything, contingency and unpredictability are the watchword by which to orientate ourselves on the question of social change. What better example of this do we have than unexpected systemic collapse of Soviet socialism, through relatively peaceful means. Not even the might of the Soviet military machine could crush this final uprising in its satellite states. In some ways it is slightly peculiar to use capitalism's diametric opposite to illustrate its own susceptibility to mutability; especially as capitalism draws strength and esteem from having vanquished this arch enemy. But for those people living in Soviet societies the perception of the 'permanence' of communism must have had a similar purchase in the mind, as capitalism has today in liberal democracy. At the height of its ubiquitous and panoptic power, it must have seemed unthinkable that communism would not remain a constant fixture determining that particular society for eternity. The dismantling of communism, epitomised by the tumbling of the Berlin Wall, was not predicted even just a few years prior. This just goes to show that all systems are prone to crisis and failure especially those which are presumed to have attained infinite presence and supremacy. However, eliminating the idea that capitalism is here with us for good, still might presuppose the advent of hitherto unknown surgical procedures to wrench this transfixing notion from the human mind.

Having said this let me be clear, there is no decisive evidence which incontrovertibly suggests that capitalism future looks doomed or that its overthrow is imminent. The future of capitalism in the short term looks stable but not secure.

direction and nature of globalisation' (Gorz, 1999: 16). They can intervene and transform global capitalism, but not if they act alone. And if we step out of the nation-state mindset, Bauman also maintains that unconventional political forces, such as those manifested in the various world and continental social forums, could evolve to provide an alternative force of change as Monbiot suggests in *The Age of Consent* (2003). Still, even the more promising regions of the world are not that hospitable to the BI. For instance Europe is often cited as a possibility, but as Will Hutton argues, contemporary Europe can hardly be thought of as an ideal 'social space' with all its mini power struggles and differences (2003: 189). Nevertheless, there has been evidence indicative of Europe emerging as the social space in which 'positive integration' (Hutton; 2003: 291) could occur.³⁷ However, even more recently the clime down on the EU constitution undermines this idea. Having said this, it has been well documented how the 'no' to further EU integration was more of a 'no' to the state of national politics (i.e. a protest vote) than some highly self-conscious vote against a social Europe.

The importance of this exploration of Bauman's thoughts on the BI is that it valorises the importance of utopian thought that shakes up hegemonic discourse. It re-ignites the radical thrust of the debate. It encourages us to think outside of our comfort zones. This paper therefore encourages us to explore Bauman's views more deeply. It is not as if the current approach has to be the only one we should consider.

And finally one very important insight that Bauman's thesis brings to the fore, is that the difficulty in radically altering the human condition is not so much due to a dearth of transformative ideas or pragmatic possibilities but more *a lack of political will and resolve*. Bauman's paper brings to the fore an extremely germane, yet frequently over-looked, observation about contemporary capitalism: *that it has generated the very conditions necessary for its own transcendence*. His paper therefore helps us consider the maximum number of paths out of capitalism.

Bauman essentially sees a rejuvenated, democratic political sphere as necessary if capitalism is to be controlled. Democracy is not possible if the polity is made up of insecure people. Thus his main argument for BI (182-3) is political. All the radical potential of BI remains as *potential* without a radicalised democracy (a classic chicken-egg problem). Perhaps one way

³⁷ By 'positive integration', Hutton means the building of coalitions for positive action among EU member states, rather than the negative integration which has dominated EU politics so far, which is characterised by a tendency to dismantle rules and regulations at the national level without the power to build-up at a European-wide level. Therefore the BI could act as a common theme around which European member states and a new and effective European, perhaps global, Left could unite.

out, is along the same lines as Gorz, to develop a campaign for unconditional BI (campaigning on the grounds of what can be Gorz and Bauman style) and developing a radical democratic movement at the same time.

To reiterate and paraphrase Gorz: the possibility of transcending capitalist society is inherent in the evolution of capitalist society itself, and this transcendence is practically attainable in ways that are achievable now. We should not forget this.

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